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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KARZAI AND GENERAL PETRAEUS DISCUSS
AFGHAN SECURITY

Classified By: Polcouns Annie Pforzheimer, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY: In a October 29 meeting, CENTCOM Commander GEN Petraeus and President Karzai reaffirmed a common commitment to vigorous efforts to combat corruption; they also reviewed the status of counter-insurgency efforts in the South, especially Helmand. Petraeus clarified for Karzai that there was no U.S. program to "pay off the Taliban" despite recent news reports relating to the signing of CERP authorities. General Petraeus estimated that discussions about a possible troop increase would conclude in two to three weeks. END SUMMARY.

12. (S) At a meeting at the Presidential Palace October 29 attended by Ambassador Eikenberry, COMISAF GEN McChrystal, Afghan MoD Wardak, MoI Atmar, and NDS Director Saleh GEN Petraeus began by praising President Karzai's recent "difficult decisions" to accept a second round of the elections, saying Karzai had been "statesmanlike and generous" to accept a second round of the elections. GEN Petraeus provided Karzai with an overview of his October 28 trip to Kandahar and Helmand, saying he was impressed with the work GEN McChrystal had done in Afghanistan. Petraeus said that GEN McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry had an effective civilian and military team in place to address issues they had talked about in earlier conversations. GEN Petraeus informed Karzai that ongoing discussions in Washington DC about a possible troop increase would probably wrap up in two or three weeks. Karzai responded by asking GEN Petraeus if he saw better prospects in the future, to which GEN Petraeus replied &I do8.

13. (S) Petraeus then mentioned efforts to fight corruption, especially with the Major Crimes Task Force. Referring to an earlier conversation with Karzai, he feigned forgetfulness about how Karzai had framed his support for the Major Crimes Task Force until a member of Karzai's staff said, &The President said you have a blank check8. Petraeus said he, of course, remembered that but did not want to bring up the phrase himself. Karzai then said, &We will always remember the blank check8. Petraeus endorsed the recent arrest of the Kandahar Afghan Border Police chief, saying it was a &big move8. He informed Karzai that, at the request of Ambassador Eikenberry and GEN McChrystal, a task force was being formed to build up Afghan correctional systems.

14. (S) GEN Petraeus continued by praising successful civ-mil clear/hold/build tactics now employed in Helmand and told the president that GEN McChrystal was anxious to take Karzai to Helmand. "High time", responded Karzai. He then asked GEN Petraeus what was happening now in the fight against insurgents and inquired what tactics the insurgents were using. GEN Petraeus replied that IEDs were the weapon of choice for the insurgents. Karzai commented that eight soldiers had been killed in an IED strike on October 28. GEN Petraeus answered that seven of the eight were in a Stryker struck by an IED containing 1,000-1,500KG of explosives.

15. (S) Further on the topic of counter-insurgency tactics, Gen. Petraeus advised Karzai that an initiative put forward by GEN McChrystal was to tailor tactics to suit the local

environment by complementing conventional with unconventional forces in a population-centric approach that empowers local communities (a reference to the Community Defense Initiative). GEN Petraeus also briefed Karzai on a mentoring initiative underway in RC-South where elements of the 4/82nd Airborne Brigade is working with ANSF forces. An objective of this partnering effort will be to more rapidly professionalize ANSF forces in the south.

¶6. (S) Karzai pointed out he had read in the newspaper that the US government was "paying off Taliban" and asked GEN Petraeus what that might be about. Petraeus replied that the report referred to a program that permitted us to provide a type of financial support (CERP funding) to insurgents who wanted to leave the Taliban and be reconciled into Afghan society.

¶7. (S) Karzai then asked for an update on the fighting in Waziristan. GEN Petraeus informed him that the fight was advancing slowly and involved a three-pronged attack. The Pakistanis were attacking with limited armor, but with significant artillery and air support. Karzai asked whether or not trust between Pakistan and the US was on the upswing, to which Petraeus replied in the affirmative. Petraeus said that he had talked many times to Pakistani GEN Kiyani, as has ADM Mullen. Karzai commented that he should call the Pakistani president in the wake of the Peshawar bombing.

¶8. (S) Karzai invited GEN Petraeus, opinion on the prospects for the next few years. Gen. Petraeus said there should be fewer and fewer insurgents and those present will be increasingly ineffective. He expanded on this answer by saying Afghanistan's next president will determine the country's way forward through his ability to bring together all parties and establishing a legitimate government at all

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levels. Karzai replied that he was happy to be praised. He remarked that in the past he has been much maligned for having &too large a tent8.

¶9. (U) General Petraeus did not clear this cable.
EIKENBERRY